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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of the Survey of Pupil Opinion, an attitude-assessment instrument adapted to the reading and "palatability" levels of high school students in compensatory programs. An initial pool of 100 items assumed to reflect "attitude toward school" was reduced to a 30-item instrument. Results revealed that, for each of three factors--social participation, perception of teachers, and self as student--the lowest mean score was obtained by the students who later dropped out of school. A copy of the instrument and tabulations and a graph of the three factor mean scores and the total mean score are included. (Author/DG)

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DEVELOPMENT OF AN INSTRUMENT TO ASSESS ATTITUDES OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN COMPENSATORY PROGRAMS

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was concerned with the search for a measurement device that could be applied in evaluating school-related attitudes of high school students participating in Title I projects.

Desired characteristics of the proposed instrument were:

1. Items reflecting "attitude toward school";
2. Vocabulary level appropriate to reading range of grades four through nine;
3. Few if any items viewed by students as inappropriate or offensive;
4. Administration time of thirty minutes or less;
5. Relative ease of administration and scoring.

Examination of commercially-available instruments led to the conclusion that such instruments did not adequately reflect the desired characteristics. Efforts were then focused on developing an appropriate instrument. The present study reports the results of these efforts.

INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

Instrument development began with the generation of a pool of 100 items assumed to reflect attitude toward school and perception of self-as-student. The pool was "boiled down" to a thirty-five item preliminary instrument. To field-test "readablility", the preliminary version was administered to five classes of low achieving seventh grade students (one class in each of five schools). Students' questions and comments (immediately following the survey administration) indicated items that were too ambiguous, too difficult, had unfamiliar terms,etc. Subsequently, five of the items were deleted, several items were re-worded, and the resulting thirty items were combined to form the Survey of Pupil Opinion.[1]

The survey was then administered to 366 low-achieving seventh-grade students in six junior high schools and 251 low achieving students (most of whom were in tenth grade) in five senior high schools. (Students entered survey responses on a machine-scorable answer sheet). For 140 of the tenth-grade students retest data were collected after a two-week time lapse. Responses were scored on a scale of 1 (least positive) to 5 (most positive).

Separate factor analyses were applied to the data from the two pupil groups i.e., grade seven and grade ten respondents. The grade seven results were inconclusive and contradictory. (E.g., "I think school is fun" factored with "I wish I could quit school"...). The grade ten results yielded three factors involving twenty-four of the original thirty items. The factors were designated Social Participation (seven items), Perception of Teacher (nine items), and Perception of Self-as-Student (eight items).[2]

[1]Appendix 1
[2]Appendix 2

The test-retest date were correlated (using total score on the twenty-four factor items) and yielded r = .71.

APPLICATION OF THE INSTRUMENT

At the beginning of the following school year, the survey was administered to 228 tenth-grade students in four senior high schools. The students, participants in a Title I "Learning Laboratory" project, were from high-poverty areas, and were characterized by prior histories of low achievement and sporadic attendance.

By the end of the school year, the students had "sorted themselves" into four groups: 1) dropped out of school (N=18); 2) failed to adjust/progress in the Learning Lab and returned to the regular school program (N=63); 3) adjusted well to Learning Lab and remained in the project (N=123); 4) moved to a Non-Title I school and tentatively identified as "upwardly mobile" (N=24).

For each student in the original sample, a mean score was computed for each of the three factors and for the total of twenty-four items. The range of possible mean scores was 1 (most negative) to 5 (most positive). The three factor mean scores and the total mean score were then computed for each of the four student groups.

RESULTS

Results, summarized in Table 1, revealed that:

1. For each of the three factors, the lowest mean score was obtained by the students who later dropped out of school; highest mean scores were attained by the students who later moved to better socio-economic areas.

2. Girls had higher mean scores on each of the three factors than did boys. This pattern was evidenced by both the students who dropped out and the students who remained in school.

3. Boys' scores reflected a greater range among the means of the four student groups than was true of girls.

4. Within each of the four student groups, the highest mean score attached to the "self-as student" factor. The factors of "social participation" and "teachers" reflected relatively little difference in mean scores.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study indicated that the Survey of Pupil Opinion tapped three dimensions of school-related attitude. Within a highly constricted sample of tenth grade students, the instrument appeared to differentiate between students who remained in school and students who later dropped out of school. This finding suggests that the Survey of Pupil Opinion may provide a useful tool for identifying potential dropouts.

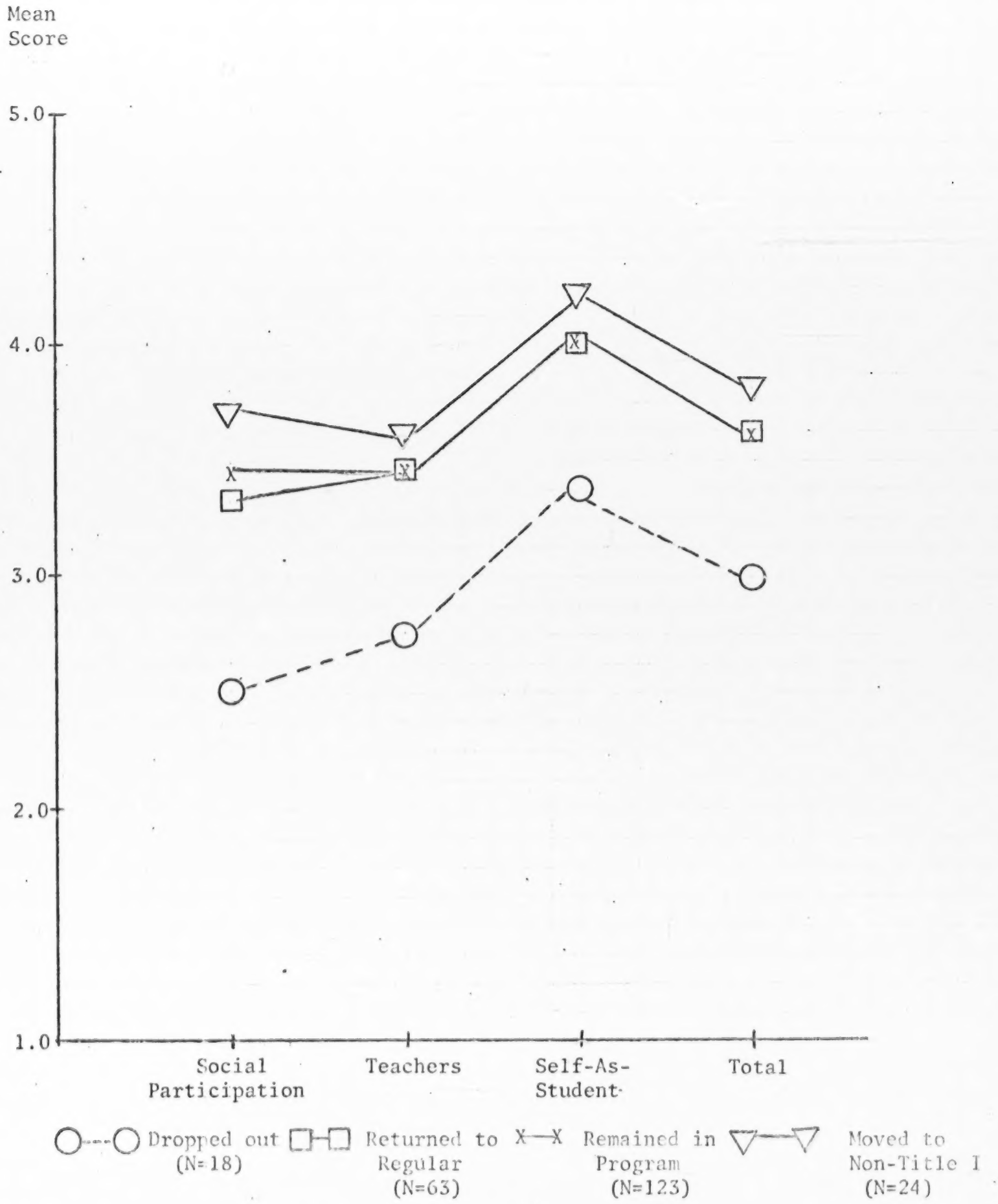
Further investigation is needed to determine the utility of the instrument with students representing a broader range of the secondary-school population.

TABLE I
Survey of Pupil Opinion
Summary of Mean Scores
Grade 10 Title I Project Participants

STUDENT GROUPS	N			FACTORS: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION			TEACHERS			SELF-AS-STUDENT			TOTAL		
	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Moved to higher socio economic area	6	18	24	3.50	3.81	3.73	3.28	3.59	3.51	4.00	4.27	4.20	3.58	3.88	3.81
Satisfactory progress-retained in prog.	81	42	123	3.35	3.60	3.44	3.31	3.49	3.37	3.82	4.34	4.00	3.49	3.81	3.60
Unsatisfactory progress-returned to regular	21	42	63	3.25	3.36	3.32	3.41	3.33	3.36	3.66	4.10	3.95	3.45	3.60	3.55
Total: Remained in school	108	102	210	3.34	3.54	3.44	3.33	3.44	3.38	3.80	4.23	4.01	3.49	3.73	3.61
Dropped out of school	9	9	18	2.14	3.14	2.64	2.37	3.15	2.76	3.04	3.67	3.35	2.53	3.32	2.92
Total: All groups	117	111	228	3.25	3.51	3.37	3.25	3.42	3.33	3.74	4.18	3.96	3.41	3.70	3.55

CHART 1

MEAN FACTOR AND TOTAL SCORES
(Boys and Girls Combined)



APPENDIX 1

Form B-1

Division of Research and Development
Cleveland Public Schools

SURVEY OF PUPIL OPINION

Here are some statements about school. Read each statement carefully and then mark the space on your answer sheet that shows how you feel about the statement. There are no wrong answers. Your true opinion whatever it is, is the right answer.

Mark only one answer for each statement. Do not skip any questions. Be sure that the number on the answer sheet matches the question number when you mark your answer. There is no limit. You will be given as much time as you need to answer all the questions. When you finish one page, go on to the next page.

There are five answer spaces for each question. The answer spaces are lettered from A to E like this: A B C D E.

Use this key to mark your answers:

A-Always B-Most of the Time C-Sometimes D-Hardly Ever E-Never

1. Chances are good that I'll succeed in school.
2. I like to read.
3. Teachers are fair.
4. School is a waste of time.
5. My parents look at my report card.
6. I think school is fun.
7. The school rules make sense.
8. I have a good time in school.
9. Students in this school are friendly.
10. I watch the clock during class.

Form B-1

Use this key to mark your answers:				
A-Always	B-Most of the Time	C-Sometimes	D-Hardly Ever	E-Never

11. I think I'm doing better in school this year than I did last year.

12. I do my assignments on time.

13. Teachers expect too much of students.

14. I ask my teachers for help.

15. My teachers understand me.

16. School is boring.

17. I take my schoolwork seriously.

18. Teachers give me the help I need in school.

19. My teachers play favorites.

20. I like my teachers.

21. My teachers pick on me too much.

22. My teachers can take a joke.

23. I look forward to my classes.

24. Teachers are too strict.

25. My parents like my school.

26. I get along well with my teachers.

27. I wish I could quit school.

28. I come to school on time.

29. I get along well with other students.

30. Teachers are friendly.

APPENDIX 2

SURVEY OF PUPIL OPINION
Items Grouped By Factor

Factor I:	Social Participation	(7 items)
(6)	I think school is fun.	.6035
(8)	I have a good time in school.	.6414
(9)	Students in this school are friendly.	.4324
(20)	I like my teachers.	.5483
(22)	My teachers can take a joke.	.4874
(23)	I look forward to my classes.	.4085
(29)	I get along well with other students.	.4318

Factor II:	Perception of Teacher	(9 items)
(3)	Teachers are fair.	.4814
(4)	School is a waste of time.	-.4445
(7)	The school rules make sense.	.4758
(13)	Teachers expect too much of students.	-.5311
(16)	School is boring.	-.4462
(19)	My teachers play favorites.	-.4563
(21)	My teachers pick on me too much.	-.5272
(24)	Teachers are too strict.	-.5888
(30)	Teachers are friendly.	.4902

SURVEY OF PUPIL OPINION
Items Grouped By Factor

Factor III:	Self-As-Student	(8 items)
(1)	Chances are good that I'll succeed in school.	.5183
(5)	My parents look at my report card.	.4549
(11)	I think I'm doing better in school this year than I did last year.	.4754
(12)	I do my assignments on time.	.4672
(17)	I take my schoolwork seriously.	.5829
(18)	Teachers give me the help I need in school.	.4191
(26)	I get along well with my teachers.	.4141
(28)	I come to school on time.	.3961

	Buffer Questions	(6 items)
(2)	I like to read.	II .2613
(10)	I watch the clock during class.	II-.2340
(14)	I ask my teachers for help.	I .2885
(15)	My teachers understand me.	III .2820
(25)	My parents like my school.	III .2228
(27)	I wish I could quit school.	II-.2643